

Remarks to the National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors January 23, 1992

Thank you very much, and welcome to all of you. Thanks to Alan Kranowitz for all his fine work and, of course, to my friend Dirk VanDongen, over here. History, a little history, I understand that he's celebrating his 25th anniversary with the NAW this year. And I might say to those who haven't worked with him closely, as I have, that he does a superb job for sound economic principles, most of which affect the NAW but some of which don't. But he's in there for these solid principles day in and day out. And I am very grateful to him for that.

I want to welcome Jay Church and Jimmy Taylor, who just welcomed me. Thank our Chief of Staff, Sam Skinner, who's come into a tough job, taken the ball, running with it and doing a first-class job. I understand you also heard from Lou Sullivan, a great Secretary of HHS, and then, of course, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Colin Powell. So I hope, through these two avenues and then Sam, you've gotten some feel in a little more detail as to what it is we're trying to do. I'm delighted to have this chance to speak to the certain key and most influential people of NAW.

The last time we got together I could hardly speak at all. [*Laughter*] I know it's good to leave them speechless, but I don't think the speaker is the one they have in mind. But look at it this way, I could have thrown up on the front row here and—[*laughter*—you've got to admit when I get the flu it's really dramatic. I don't want to dwell on that subject, but one, it was embarrassing, and two, in 24 hours I just felt like a million bucks again. So, I have a funny feeling that a lot of people in this country maybe understood getting the flu. But nevertheless, that's history, and I'm just delighted to be here and see you all today.

You probably read a lot about it: We are working hard on a State of the Union Message for next week. I believe that people that think as you do will be pleased with the results. I'm going to use that occasion to continue to push for the things we stand for, and that means jobs. It means a strong

and growing economy and a marketplace that's free of needless interference. It means telling Congress that we've got to hold the line on Government spending. And yes, there's a lot of pressures for more and more Federal money. That means taxpayers' money, incidentally. I still understand that point. [*Laughter*] And yet I think it is my responsibility to recognize that the deficit is outrageously large and that we have got to say no from time to time to these fantastically good-sounding but horribly detrimental spending plans. And I plan to bring that point up. We have got to hold the line on spending.

You here at NAW have been a tremendous help through the years in working for a commonsense approach to the economy. In fact, I count on the NAW's expertise in more ways than you realize, having just asked Nick Calio, an alumnus, to return to help us work on Capitol Hill. Many of you may not have met him, but he was here and then went over to NAW and will be returning to head up a very important part of our White House organization.

Let's face it, this is an election year. And so you're going to hear all kinds of proposals out there promoting a lot of gimmicks. Given the fact this country is hurting, people are hurting, you're going to see a lot of quick fixes that will supposedly turn the economy around. I don't believe we need them. I think we've got to set commonsense goals, stick with them, and then, as I say, in the State of the Union Message I'll be making specific proposals as to how to help more rapidly achieve those goals.

Any plan that truly prepares our economy for the future has got to meet five tests. One, it must stimulate investment that's necessary to create jobs. Secondly, it's got to bolster the real estate values and increase home sales. One of the disturbing things in these slow times has been the diminution of a family's fundamental balance sheet that comes from the marking down of homes and real estate. And so we've got to bolster

real estate values, increase home sales. That's number two. Number three, it must give Americans confidence that they will be able to afford the cost of raising a family. That means education; we've got some bold educational reforms. It means obtaining health care. And fourth, it must increase America's capacity to compete in a global economy. And finally, number five, it must control this wasteful Government spending and got to work to bringing this deficit down.

And taken all together, these tests, I think, will separate serious proposals from the quick-fix proposals, the gimmicks. Some of my critics say they want to create jobs, and then they call for raising taxes and imposing even more mandates, centrally controlled mandates to hamstring businesses with Government redtape. Or they say they want to make the U.S. economy competitive, and then they call for building a fence around the United States of America, the old-fashioned siren's call of protection.

These gimmicks are about politics. They are not about prosperity for the United States of America. And prosperity lies in opening markets, not closing them. And I'm pleased that recently, with our trip to Asia, we've been able to make progress in that regard without resorting to protectionism.

Yesterday, for example, we signed a path-breaking agreement ensuring the U.S. computer companies will be able to compete and compete fairly for the Japanese Government, not the private sector there. We're already selling—40 percent of computers into Japan's private sector are U.S. But .4 percent, to give you an example, .4 percent of the Government-bought computers are U.S. So, it can't be a question of quality. So, yesterday we signed this path-breaking agreement that ensures the U.S. computer companies will be allowed to compete fairly for Japanese Government, for the computer market of the Government. And that's what we should be doing, beating down the barriers to our exports.

I mentioned health care. We must and will be doing something about that. I think I'll have sound proposals. But you'll also hear a lot of loose talk in an election year about health care. And I'm going to discuss this issue in depth and quite positively in

my address next week. But we ought to be clear about a couple of health care principles at the start.

First, Government efforts to centrally manage or mandate benefits produce more problems than they solve. And secondly, we must forgo approaches to the problem that cost jobs. Now this is a time to concentrate on creating jobs, not driving small businesses out of business. And that means don't overburden the small businesses with a lot of Federal mandates.

I salute the NAW for its leadership in creating HEAL, the Health Care Early [Equity] Action League, a major coalition that promotes market-based solutions to the problems in our health care system. And I look forward to working with HEAL after I announce my health care plan.

As each of you knows, what American businesses want is a fair shake from our trading partners and certainly from the Government. And let them go head-on-head in a world marketplace, and I am absolutely convinced the American companies can out-think, outwork, outcompete anyone in the world. The companies and the workers, the work force, they can do just that. And I share your faith, your undiminished faith in American business because, like you, I understand the values that have made American business the model for the whole world: Hard work, creativity, and certainly a willingness to take risks, to believe in your dreams and then make good on them.

If we build on those values and if we use them as our guiding light, this economy is going to turn around. I am not a gloom-and-doom person about the American economy. We've been through an awful lot, but this economy will turn around, particularly if we take the approach to these economic issues that I've outlined here today. We're going to lead the world. We are the undisputed leader of the world. We ought not to forget that.

There are some people in this room that are young enough to have children, young children that is. *[Laughter]* And I don't happen to fit into that category about young children, but I've got grandchildren. Some of you all have got little kids. And

there's something rather nice that they're going to school, coming home, going to sleep at night, and not worrying about a nuclear conflict erupting and engulfing the whole world.

We've got a lot to be grateful for in this country. We've got a lot of problems, but we're the leader of the world, and I intend to keep it just exactly that way. We're going to whip this economic problem we're facing. We are going to continue to lead the world. We are going to stay involved at home and certainly abroad, now and well into the next century.

So, don't let the continuous pounding of

what's wrong with this country obscure your fundamental confidence, your fundamental conviction, which is mine, that we are the greatest, freest country on the face of the Earth, and we're going to prevail.

Thank you all very, very much.

Note: The President spoke at 9:20 a.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to the following association officers: Dirk VanDongen, president; Jay Church, chairman of the board; Jimmy Taylor, chairman-elect; and Alan Kranowitz, vice president for government relations.

Remarks on the Presentation of the Senior Executive Service Awards

January 23, 1992

Connie, thank you. And at the outset of these remarks, let me just pay my respects to Connie Newman and say what a first-class job I know she's doing at OPM. And I know that you take a lot of pride in this event, since you rose through the ranks yourself, starting, as I understand it, if my history is correct, 30 years ago as a GS-3—[laughter]—I've still got you beat on the age now—[laughter]—GS-3 clerk-typist at Interior. And look at you now. And we are very, very proud of you.

I also want to welcome Ed Derwinski, Secretary Derwinski; Acting Secretary Busey; Secretary Stone; Pat Saiki, the Administrator at SBA; Director Sessions; and so many other distinguished guests. I think I see Admiral Truly out there.

I hear that when one of the recipients was told that the speaker today would be the most important man in Washington, he said, "I thought Joe Gibbs had already left for Minneapolis." [Laughter] We are caught up in a frenzy here, but that should not detract from the importance of this event.

And it is a privilege for me to be over here today to congratulate some extraordinary people, you might say unsung heroes. You don't always get at the head table, don't always have your name flashing out there

in lights. You may be lucky on that one. [Laughter] But really extraordinary people.

Vince Lombardi, you remember, he gave some pretty good advice off the field as well as on. He put it this way; he said, "The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence."

Well, today what we're doing is honoring the lives of great quality. I am told that only one percent of our SES can receive the Distinguished Executive Award. And that means that out of more than 3 million public servants, you few here today embody the very finest qualities of leadership, dedication, personal integrity, and public service.

I reminisce that when I was growing up, my parents, particularly my dad, instilled in me a tremendous respect for the duty and obligation of public service. And I know that you share my belief that Government service is a public trust, that the highest honor we can have is to serve our country and in so doing serve our countrymen.

Good government cannot work without you, committed men and women who devote yourselves to making certain that our Government truly serves the people. Look at the contributions that you've made